

SB 150 READING REQUIREMENTS–Talking Points

1. The Utah State Board of Education OPPOSES SB 150. The bill prescribes standards, requirements and timelines for testing a student’s reading proficiency and making decisions about retaining or promoting the student. These are curriculum and evaluation decisions that should be outlined and monitored by the State Board of Education under the “general control and supervision” authority of the State Board provided in the Utah Constitution.

Additionally:

2. The evidence is persistent and clear: neither social promotion nor retention helps students get back to grade level in reading. The solution is not in either choice. The negative effects of retention are well-documented in hundreds of studies over many years.

3. Students get to grade level in reading by receiving additional, targeted instruction: **focused intervention**. This intervention is characterized by early identification, accurate diagnosis, and early and persistent intervention in one-on-one settings or very small groups by trained teachers (some studies show that trained paraprofessionals are effective).

4. The potential cost of this bill is an impossible hurdle, especially in this economic climate. In the past, the Quality Teaching Student Achievement block (\$77.6 m. and eliminated in FY ‘09) funded professional development, tutoring, district reading specialists and coaches and the review of student data. This year’s projected budget eliminates a remaining \$15 m. in the Intervention for Student Success block grant which previously funded summer programs, tutoring and student interventions. The USOE fiscal note was 100+ m. A more recent fiscal note, based on the pared down bill, is \$72+m. How can we pretend to provide focused, early intervention (which might really help) with a zero fiscal note!?

5. Finally, the language in the bill about students at risk (line 36+) automatically exempts a broad range of students—probably in violation of federal law—and to the dismay of advocates for students with disabilities.